



June 15, 2012

Administrator Jackson:

The Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association rejects the idea of extending the Environmental Protection Agency's public comment period for its draft watershed assessment of Bristol Bay.

The current 60-day public comment period, already announced and underway, is robust and generating strong participation. From the commercial fishermen's perspective, there is no reason to delay or stall the agency's process and timeline.

The EPA has already spent 15 months preparing this thorough, scientific report and is in the middle of a vigorous public comment period that includes eight well-attended public hearings; hearings that generated overwhelming support to protect the Bristol Bay salmon fishery now. In addition, there is a concurrent peer review of the document by a panel of experts. Ample time is already scheduled for review of the draft Assessment.

As fishermen prepare right now to begin harvesting the sockeye salmon of Bristol Bay, they are acutely aware of the draft Watershed Assessment. Hundreds of Bristol Bay commercial fishermen participated in the field hearings and continue to express their written comments. There has also been uncommonly high turnout and participation in the public review process from a particular segment of the fleet; commercial fishermen in Bristol Bay's rural villages and communities.

For these reasons we oppose any delay in the existing process – delay that would further darken the cloud of uncertainty hanging over the fishery.

Commercial fishermen are aware of the draft report and many have commented. We urge the EPA to continue with its announced timeline, proceeding with the already scheduled 60-day public comment period.

Respectfully,

Bob Waldrop
Executive Director